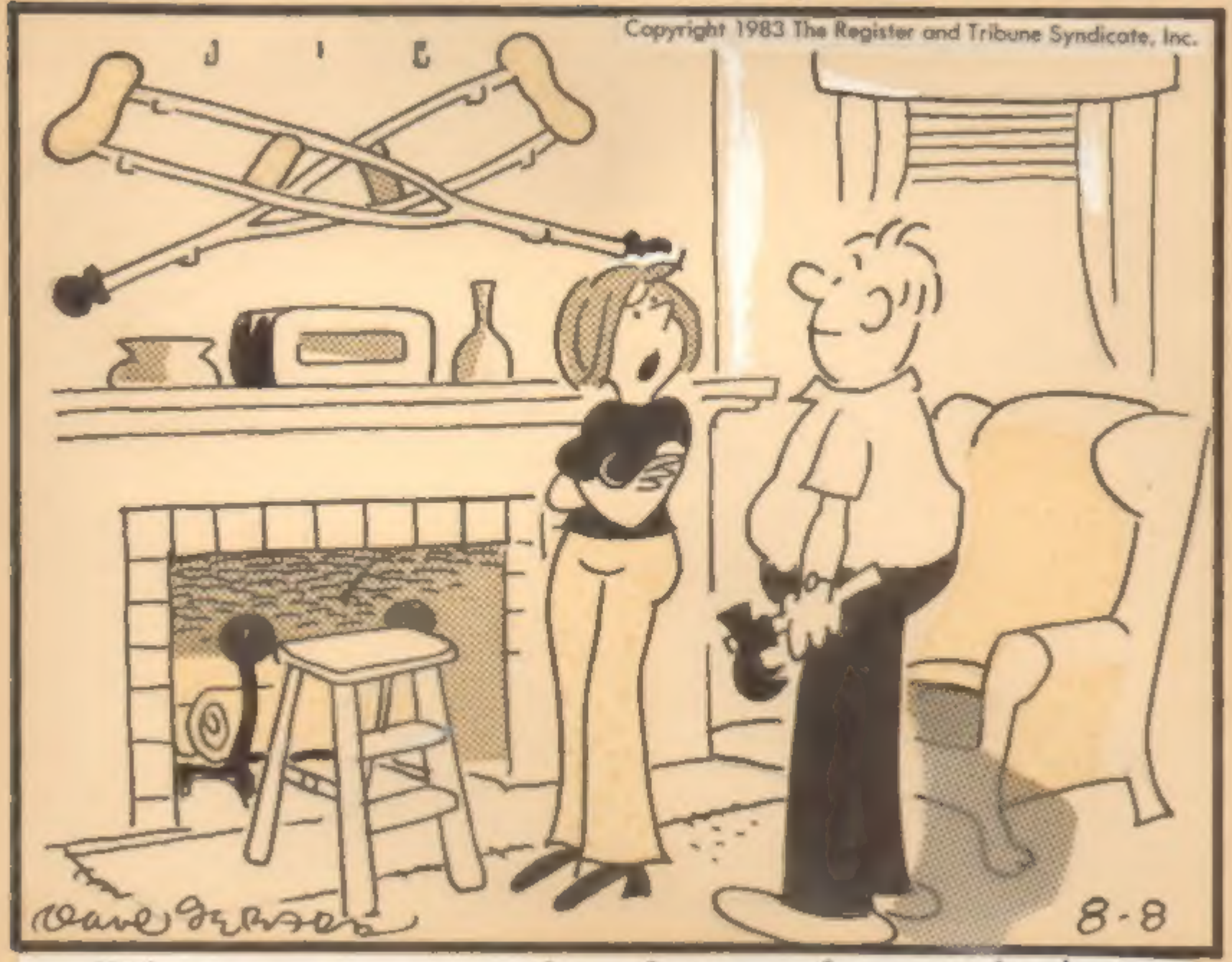
CITIZEN SMITH

By Dave Gerard



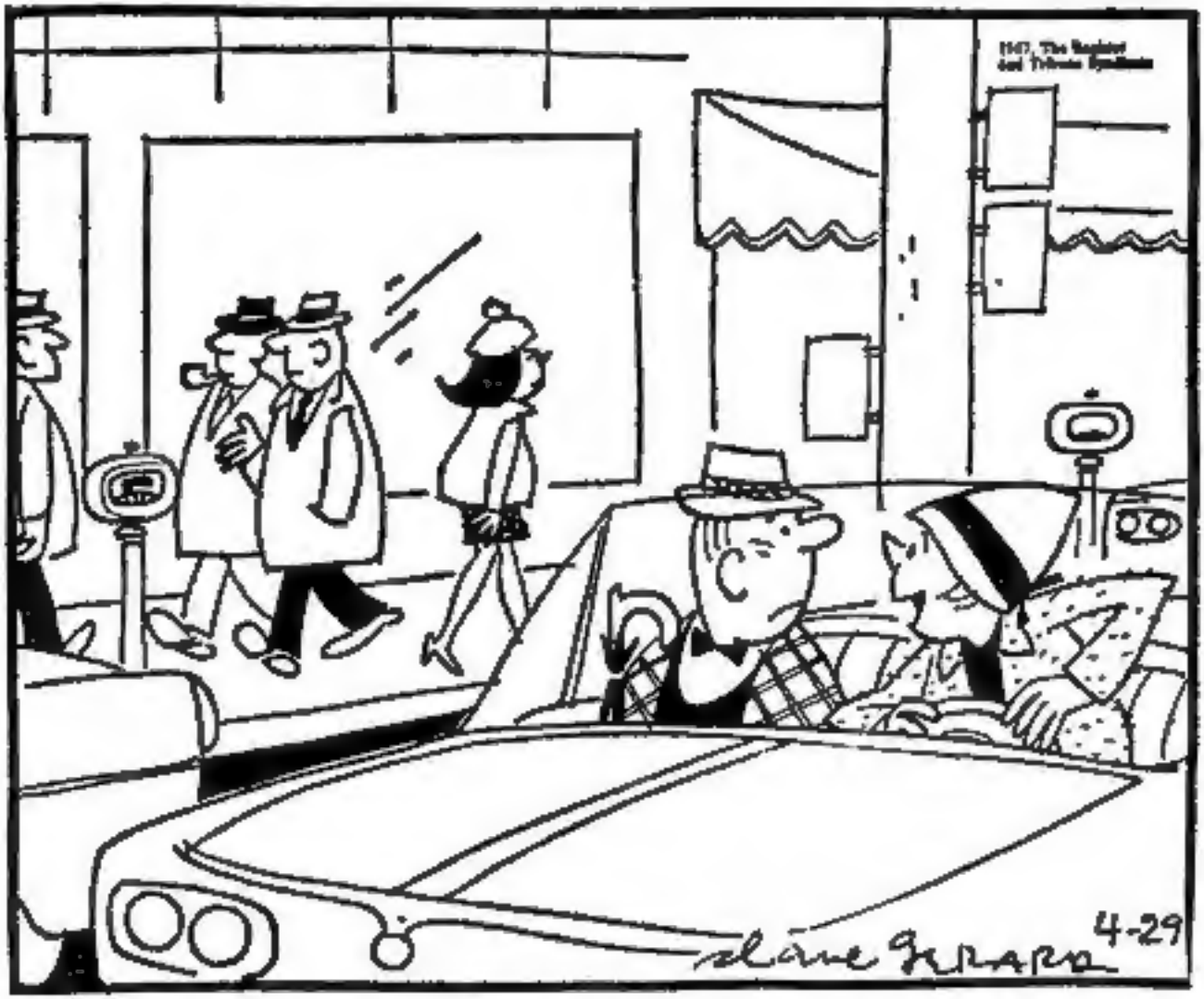
"I know you were on them for over four weeks, but I'll give you 30 minutes to put mother's picture back up there!"

CITIZEN SMITH

"I don't think that turning down your electric blanket one notch is contributing much to the energy crisis!"

CITIZEN SMITH

—By Dave Gerard



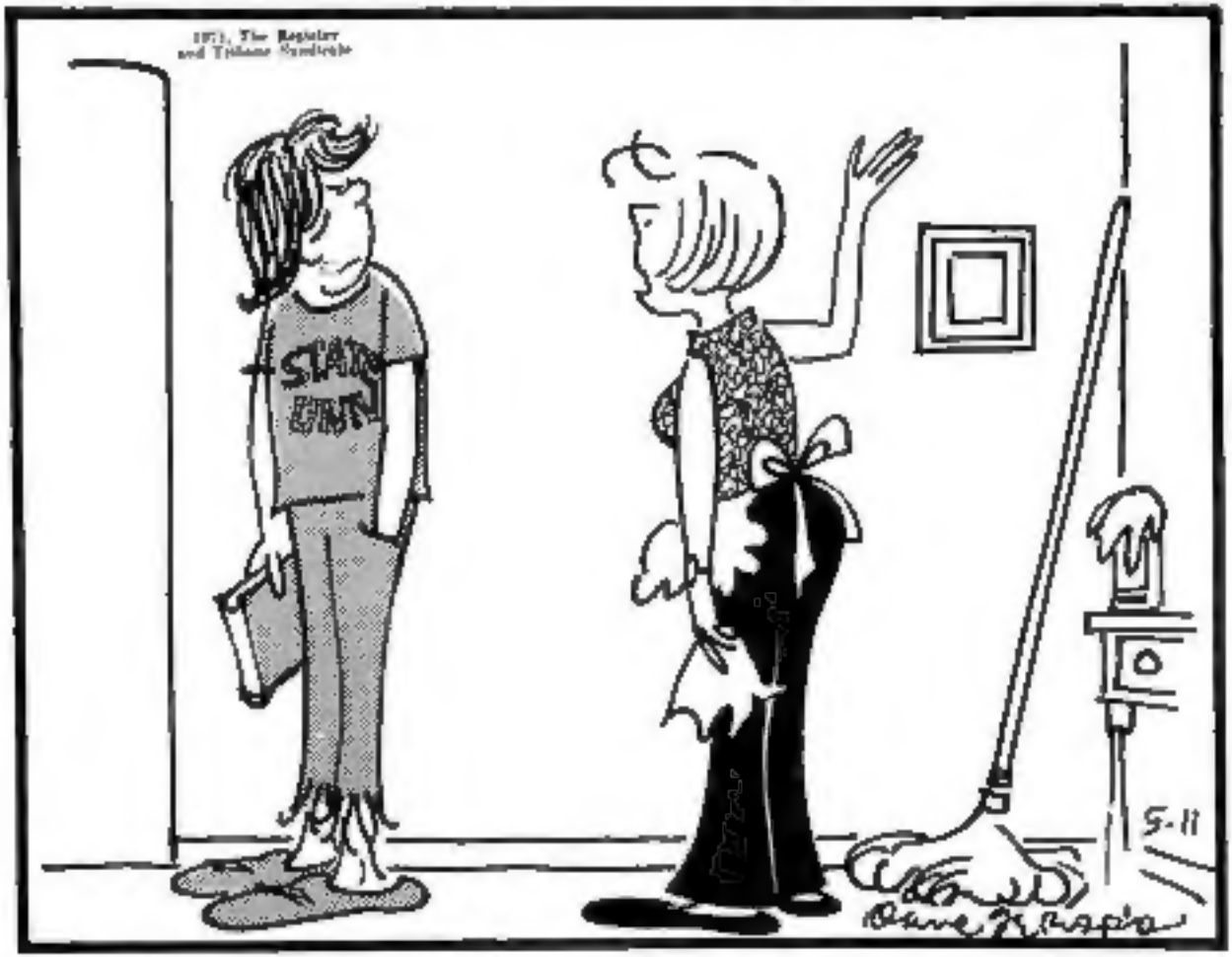
"But it's a PARKING SPACE, silly! I can always think of something to buy!"

CITIZEN SMITH

—By Dave Gerard

"Aren't you carrying this tight money thing a little far? No free matches!"

CITIZEN SMITH By Dave Gerard



"All I'm asking is that you write your grandmother and thank her for your Christmas present before the 8-cent postage rate goes into effect!"

CITIZEN SMITH

By Dave Gerard

"Yesterday was the last day of the year you work for the government -- now how about doing a little work for ME?"

CITIZEN SMITH By Dave Gerard

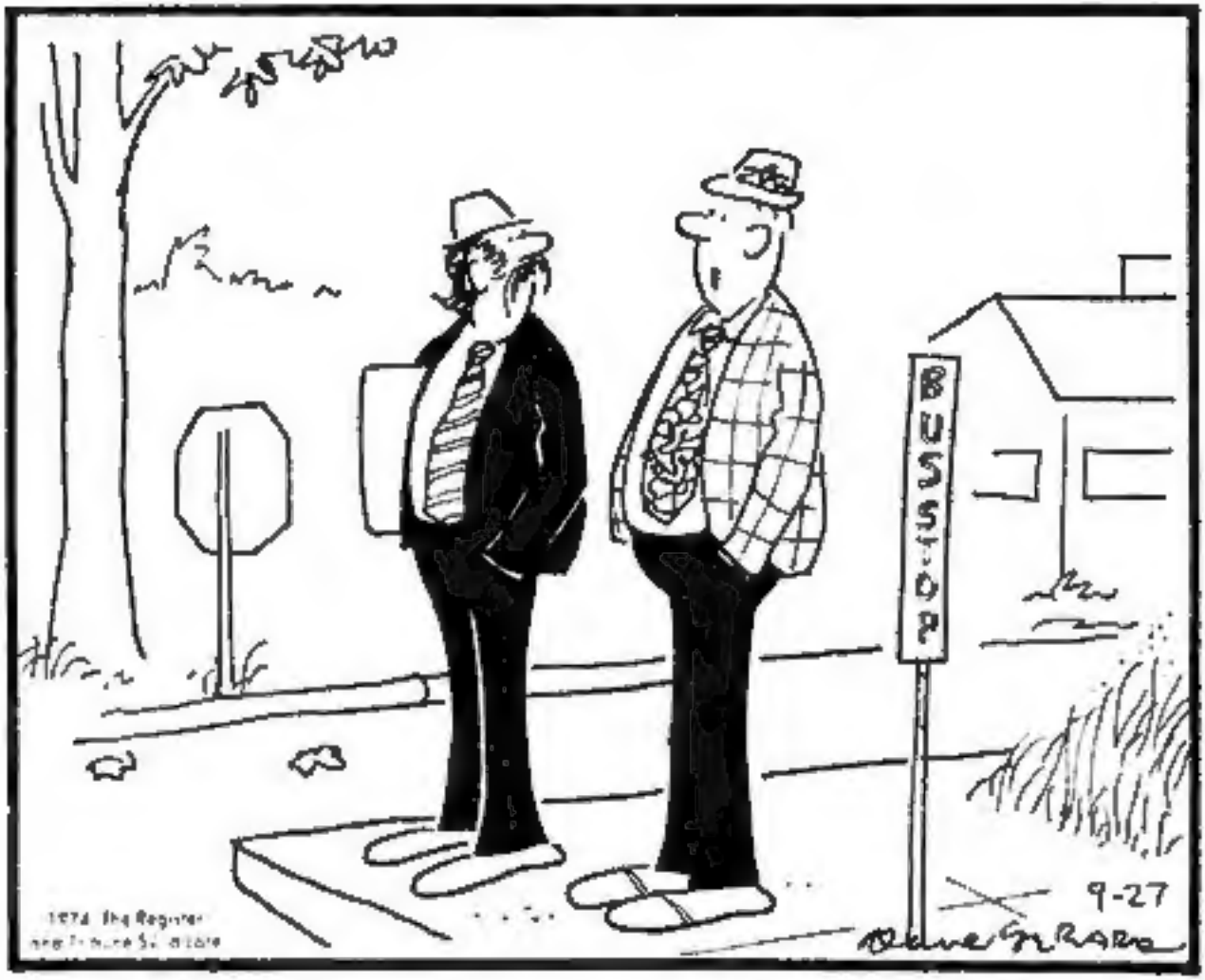
"The government could learn a lot from you about a MAKE WORK PROGRAM!"

CITIZEN SMITH

By Dave Gerard

"Your $1000 deposit has grown through the years to $1468, so it is now worth the same as when you put it in!"

CITIZEN SMITH By Dave Gerard



"Knowing what I know now — I should've invested heavily in comic books and thrown my stocks away!"

CITIZEN SMITH

—By Dave Gerard

"There's even a shortage of polluted water this year!"

CITIZEN SMITH — By Dave Gerard

"It says a child can pitch it. Go next door and borrow one of the neighbor's kids!"

CITIZEN SMITH — By Dave Gerard

CITIZEN SMITH — By Dave Gerard

"Hey, you must've been giving the street department a hard time. They put a parking meter in front of your house!"

CITIZEN SMITH — By Dave Gerard

"I nearly bought a used car today but the running boards looked like they had rusted through!"

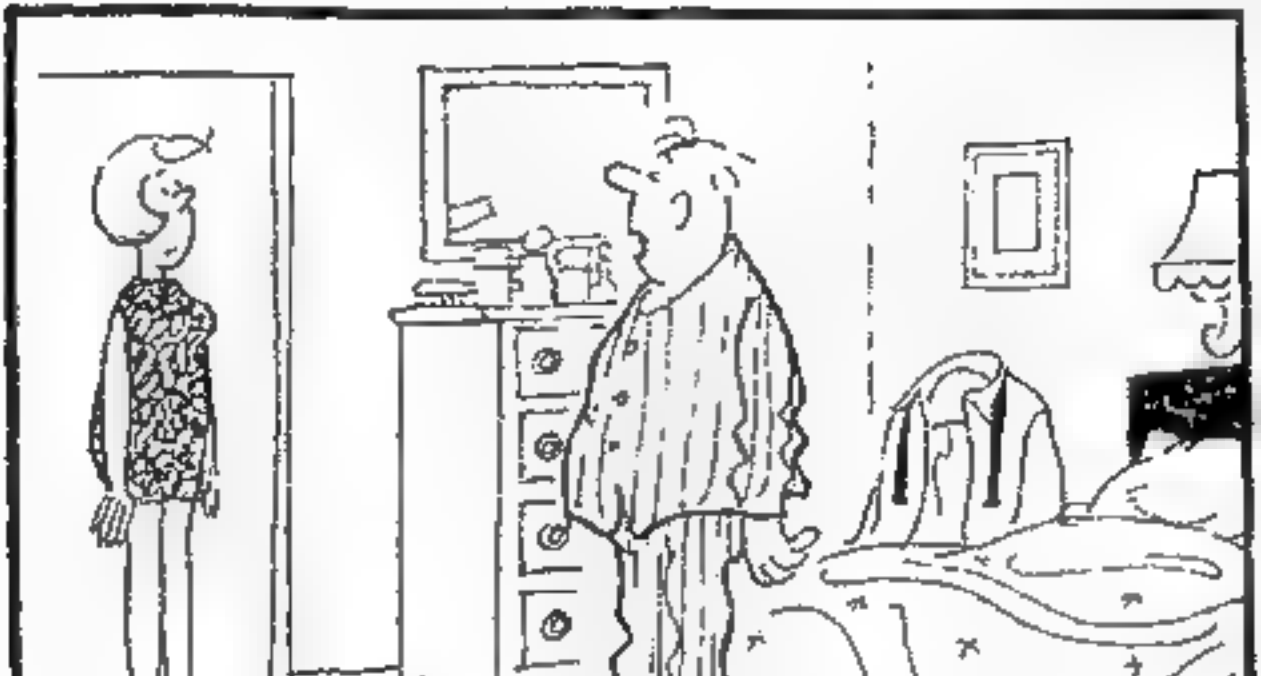
CITIZEN SMITH By Dave Gerard

CITIZEN SMITH By Dave Gerard

"He says they're going to widen the street again!"

CITIZEN SMITH

By Dave Gerard



"They say every individual produces 5 pounds of trash a day. I'm going to do the world a favor and go back to bed!"

CITIZEN SMITH

Average man's frustrations captured in Citizen Smith

By JAMES A. GILLASPY
Star Staff Reporter

Crawfordsville, Ind. — Citizen Smith is really up against the wall. And this time, it's for good.

The character, a cartoonist's portrait of the average man and his struggle against life's routine frustrations, appears daily on Page 2 of *The Indianapolis Star* and in newspapers across the country.

"I have no other objective right now but to wind up some things and take off to Florida," explains Dave Gerard, the Crawfordsville man who created "Citizen Smith" 18 years ago and now looks forward to the character's finale.

Gerard, 75, is retiring from the deadline pressures of daily cartooning.

"It was a hell of a lot of work," says Gerard, the mayor of this Montgomery County seat from 1972 to 1976. "I think I deserve a little rest."

Citizen Smith By Dave Gerard
"Slipped and fell in your own back yard? My wife slipped and fell on city property and got a $3,000 settlement."

THE WORK began after Gerard was graduated from Wabash College in 1931 and began selling gags to magazines such as *Colliers*, the *Saturday Evening Post* and *American*. The recognition began in 1946, when Gerard introduced a weekly color cartoon for *Colliers* dubbed "Viewpoint."

"Viewpoint was about couples more than anything else," recalls Gerard, whose works are being exhibited in the Crawfordsville Public Library this month. "That was a time in my life when we were young and newly married. It was two different viewpoints on a single theme. It was a difficult thing to do."

The original "Viewpoint" on display in the Crawfordsville library, is a reminder of the difficulty he faced when he used the names of people he knew in his cartoon strip, a Gerard trademark. The 1946 cartoon shows two women making catty remarks about a younger and more attractive woman with a male escort. One of the fictitious women has the same name as a woman who lived near Gerard at the time. She registered a very vocal complaint.

"I didn't know that her husband had been playing around," explains Gerard. "And that (cartoon) kind of portrayed him as a womanizer."

BUT THE toughest part of his job was coming up with good, new material, particularly after he began drawing "Viewpoints" as a daily cartoon in syndication for John F. Dille, the creator of "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century." Consequently, Gerard's first introduction to the "ultimate dream" – syndication of his cartoon – was shortlived.

But Gerard suspects the strip was also too "cerebral" to attract and hold a large audience. He corrected that problem with his next creative effort, a sort of "Citizen Smith" from the perspective of a 6-year-old boy.

"Will Yum" was me, actually," says Gerard of the impish and frequently mischievous lad he introduced in the early 1950s.

"Will Yum" was a big success, and not only in the states. The strip was published overseas and in eight different languages, including French, Spanish, Danish and Japanese. Gerard had penned more than 5,000 "Will Yum" panels, and had a few Dell comic books to his credit, by the time "Citizen Smith" was created in 1967.

"I HAD to make a decision — 'Will Yum' or 'Citizen Smith' – I thought maybe 'Citizen Smith' would do a little better," recalls the aging cartoonist with a still youthful smile. "And I was really excited about doing it because it was a more mature approach. We had a pretty successful time. We're closing out after 18 years now."

Throughout the life of Gerard's typical taxpayer — an average American beset by ordeals as complicated as inflation and as perplexing as tree stakes which sprout better than trees — the cartoonist has maintained a single objective.

"I wasn't trying to mold anything," says Gerard. "I was just reflecting. I was looking for the funny side, the joke. I always have. There isn't any message in it. ... I was trying to communicate with people. I like the idea of people writing in to me and saying, 'Hey, this has happened to me,' and understanding what Citizen Smith was going through."

GERARD POINTS to a particularly bothersome time in the life of cartoon character Adam Smith as an example of how conflicts in Smith's life parallel the frustrations of real life.

Not unconcidentally, it was also a bothersome time for Gerard, who had just broken his leg and was hobbling around on crutches.

"I was talking to one of the editors, trying to get a bit of sympathy and guidance. And he said, 'Why don't you break his leg?' And I said I hadn't thought of that. So all the time I had a broken leg, he had a broken leg."

So what frustration will Citizen Smith be enduring when he makes his final appearance Dec. 29?

A WEEK from Saturday he gets fired," reveals Gerard. "The boss says, 'I'll have to hand it to you, Smith, you're no quitter. You give me no recourse — I'll have to fire you.'"

To the real boss, Gerard, it is a proper fate for his eternal victim of circumstance.

"I haven't buried Smith," he jests. "I just fired him."

Star photo

Dave Gerard's cartoon was reflecting, looking for the funny side, the joke

CITIZEN SMITH

By Dave Gerard

THE HARDCORE CAPITALIST

TO CARL MAY
BEST WISHES - Dave Gerard

"Three pounds of meat for my dog — and would you throw in a soup bone for me?"

CITIZEN SMITH By Dave Gerard

"Well, I see the government got another raise!"